

**ROLE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN THE
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

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**ROLE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN THE ISRAELI-
PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

by

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DOP	Declaration of Principles
EU	European Union
Fateh	Palestinian National Liberation movement
GA	General Assembly
GAR	General Assembly Resolution
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
JA	Jewish Agency
JNF	Jewish National Fund
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
NP	National Party
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OT	Occupied Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad/ Islamic Jihad
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PM	Prime Minister
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PPP	Palestine People's Party

UN	United Nations
UN SCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNL	Unified National Leadership
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee
US	United States

PERANAN NASIONALISME AGAMA DALAM KONFLIK ISRAEL - PALESTIN

ABSTRAK

Konflik terhadap Palestin amat terkesan, terutamanya terhadap ideologi, agama, dan bahagian negara yang telah dibina berdekad lamanya. Tesis ini menganalisis dari segi konteks sejarah, ideologi, dan struktur kuasa yang berkaitan di antara Yahudi Israel dan Palestin Arab sepanjang abad kedua puluh. Matlamat dan tujuan utama tesis ini adalah mengkaji alasan bagi ketegangan yang berpanjangan dalam konflik Palestin – Israel. Terdapat pelbagai alasan di sebalik konflik yang berpanjangan ini. Namun demikian, tesis ini hanya menekankan tentang nasionalisme agama di antara Palestin dan Yahudi. Konflik ini menggambarkan kegagalan kedua-dua pihak yang bertelingkah dalam menentukan konsesi wilayah mereka, yang berpunca daripada nasionalisme Arab dan Zionisme. Tesis ini mengkaji Perjanjian Perdamaian Israel-Palestin 1993-2000 (Persetujuan Damai Oslo menjadi era baru bagi rakyat Palestin) berdasarkan metodologi sumber primer dan sekunder daripada kajian kualitatif dengan analisis sejarah dan teori konstruktivis. Di samping itu, metodologi penyelidikan adalah menggunakan kronologi sejarah dan sorotan literatur kualitatif untuk mengkaji hujahan ini. Tesis ini merumuskan bahawa terdapat beberapa semakan literatur dan sejarah yang boleh digunakan bagi membahaskan alasan di sebalik kegagalan usaha perdamaian ini. Disertasi ini menganalisis Deklarasi Prinsip Oslo 1993 dalam usaha mencari jawapan bagi persoalan dan pertanyaan tentang kegagalan tersebut. Di samping itu, impak politik turut ditekankan dalam usaha menentukan sikap Palestin dan Israel dalam konflik di antara mereka. Tesis ini merupakan kajian kes tentang perundingan keamanan yang

berterusan di antara Isreal dan Palestin, dan kurangnya impak daripada Persetujuan Perdamaian Oslo. Justeru, ia menyumbang terhadap pemahaman kepentingan politik tentang identiti bangsa dan perkaitan di antara identiti, budaya, agama dan dinamik konflik. Tesis ini menunjukkan bahawa identiti nasional dengan agama boleh difahami dan digunakan sebagai penggalak atau promoter bagi kedua-dua keamanan dan konflik. Justeru, dapat dirumuskan bahawa peranan nasionalisme agama dalam konflik Israel-Palestin ditonjolkan khususnya selepas Persetujuan Damai Oslo dan perdamaian pada masa depan akan tercapai dengan penyertaan semua pihak yang terkesan.

ROLE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

ABSTRACT

The conflict over Palestine is deeply rooted in ideological, religious, and national divisions which is built up for decades. This thesis analyzed the historical context, ideology, and structures of power that animated relations between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians during the twentieth century. The primary aim and purpose of this thesis is to examine the reasons for the insoluble nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The reasons behind the continuation of the conflict are various. However, this thesis mainly concentrated on the ones stemmed from the clash of Palestinian and Jewish religious nationalism. This conflict represents the failure of both sides in making any concession from their territorial attachments, which resulted from Arab nationalism and Zionism. The thesis investigated the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement of 1993-2000 (the Oslo Accords has marked a new era for the Palestinians) by placing through the methodology of primary and secondary source of qualitative study investigating with historically analyze and constructivist theory. Also, the researcher's methodology is using the historical chronology and qualitative literature review to investigate this argues. This thesis concludes that there were several historical and literature review to debate the reasons behind the failures of peaceful. Furthermore, constructivist theory is tested in the envisioning of imperative re-imaginings of society to consequently improve relations of groups and parties with their political rivals .This dissertation analyzed the Oslo Declaration of Principles of 1993 and the purpose of this dissertation is to

answer the question and asks why it failed and focus on the impact of political party affiliation in determining Palestinian and Israeli political attitudes toward the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. This thesis is a case study of the ongoing peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and the lack of impact that past agreements have made on the recent Oslo Accords. Further, this contributes to the understanding of the political importance of national identity and the relation between identity, Culture, religion and conflict dynamics. This work contributes to show that national identity with religion can be understood and used as promoter of both peace and conflict. It is concluded that the role of religious nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is highlighted specially after the Oslo Accords and future peace will be with the participation all affected groups.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Palestinian-Israeli struggle is one of the most intractable conflicts that seem to be unresolvable through conflict resolution processes and international mediation (Albin, 1997; Gabbay, 2007). Not only is the conflict intractable, but it is also deteriorating and escalating as the positions and the willingness of both parties become more polarized.

The significance of religion within nationalism conflicts has risen steadily in recent decades within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The political discourse on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is infused with religious symbols and values that incorporate the sanctity of the land, the religious commandment to control and settle it, the holy sites, and the war, terrorism, and sacrifice undertaken for the sake of these religious ideals. As long as the religious discourse was solely within the purview of a minority, religion did not pose a real barrier to resolution of the conflict. Since the Oslo process (1993) began, however, this discourse has expanded and taken hold even among secular leaders, as well as among members of the public that are not considered religious.

Therefore, this thesis will examine the national policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict to evaluate how religious belief has and continues to shape policymakers' decisions. In order to evaluate the potential influence of religious belief, this key term will be examined in greater depth to understand how belief may lead to actions. The issue of land encompasses many different issues such as the future of Jerusalem, the solution to the refugees question, the final border between Palestinians and Israelis, and the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza-Strip. This thesis examines specifically the struggle over land between Palestinians and Israelis

particularly those conflicts relating to Israeli settlement in Palestinian territories after the Oslo Agreement period.

The above mentioned positions determined the destiny of the peace processes. The parties of the conflict preferred to preserve the idea of the continuation of the conflict as an instrument for insisting on their national demands. This culminated in a deadlock in the peace efforts mainly failed in bringing forward the offers of peaceful solutions regarding sharing the same territory. The ambition of the Jews to settle on the strategic parts of Palestine and ensure its borders, and the Palestinians' efforts to regain their territories from the Israelis led to the failure in achieving territorial compromise in every peace effort. This thesis, therefore, tries to explain the failure of a lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict by analyzing the peace initiatives in terms of the role of the issues dealing with territorial compromise. The failure of every peace effort is emphasized by this thesis in order to prove the importance of territorial compromise once again for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Therefore, this study asserted that incompatibility of territorial claims of the parties stemmed from conflicting religious nationalisms and the use of the conflict as an instrument in breaking up the peace process in order to gain more advantageous position in the conflict are the main factors that are effective in the insoluble nature of the conflict. In other words, territorial and religion claims of both sides and the use of the conflict to further their domestic political aims are the basic reasons for the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

1.2 Importance of the Topic

The Israel–Palestine conflict remains a crucial issue in international affairs, especially when the relations between Islamic and Western countries are considered. People and government units from Arabic, Muslim, and Western countries have become increasingly concerned with the progress of this conflict. The challenge that Israel poses to the Arab–Muslim world is unique in that it has neither precedent nor parallel in Islamic history (Faruqi, 1980). From the perspective of Muslims, Palestine is an Islamic cause (Al-Bouti, 2006; Faruqi, 1980; Nusse, 1998) and its conflict with Israel is ‘the crucible of the conflicts affecting the Muslim ummah’ that has ‘acted as the epicentre of global jihad’ for many decades (Bonney, 2004). To validate these claims, several polls have been conducted in Arab and Muslim countries over the past years, and the poll results consistently show that the majority of Arabs and Muslims consider Palestine a central issue (Hirst, 2003).

From March 2010 to May 2010, the Pew Research Center conducted a poll and found that 97% of Egyptians and Jordanians, 72% of Indonesians, 63% of Turks, and 59% of Pakistanis sympathized with the Palestinians (Kohut, Doherty, & Wike, 2012). The similar attitudes of Muslim Lebanese, Jordanians, Palestinians, and Syrians toward Israel are mainly unified by ‘the role of religion in society and perceptions toward Israel’ (Khashan, 2000). A study on the causes and effects of Middle Eastern conflicts, which have been ongoing since 1945, suggested that the conflicts between Islamic and Western countries could be mitigated by resolving the Israel–Palestine conflict beforehand (Milton Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2009).

Despite their remoteness from its core, Westerners are also highly concerned about the Israel–Palestine conflict. In a January 2005 report from the Pew Research Center, 85% of Americans considered such conflict as a central goal of US foreign

policies. Of this number, a respective 58% and 42% suggested that these policies should give critical and high priority to the resolution of such dispute. Such proportions have remained consistent to some degree since the launch of these polls in 1993. Moreover, most Americans believe that the resolution of the Israel–Palestine conflict is the key to winning the ‘war on terror,’ discouraging acts of terrorism, and putting an end to Middle Eastern disputes (WorldPublicOpinion. Org, 2006).

However, despite the willingness of several countries to collaborate in resolving such disputes, the conflict between Israel and Palestine persists because of several factors, including the existence of international laws, the asymmetry of the conflicting parties, the role of the US military, the diplomatic and financial support of Western countries to Israel, and the absence of a religious dimension to facilitate the peace process.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is also characterised by an immense asymmetry in terms of the military, political, diplomatic, and economic power of the conflicting parties as well as a profound disparity in the image of Israelis and Palestinians in the West. The ‘peace process’ has failed to achieve peace largely on account of an insistence on negotiations between the parties, despite their asymmetry and for its almost complete neglect of religious nationalism ideology (Rubenberg, 2003). From the Palestinian perspective, the conflict is a struggle for the right to ‘self-determination without external interference’; the right to ‘national independence and sovereignty’; and the right to ‘return to homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted’. From the Israeli perspective, it is a struggle to ensure such claims are not realised for they are considered detrimental to Zionist ambitions, including the survival and prosperity of the Jewish state.

Both the Israeli and Palestinian governments are challenged by the role of religion in resolving the conflict, and these challenges mostly lie within their respective boundaries. One of these conflicts materialized in the case of Hanan Ashrawi (2014), a Palestinian Christian who was appointed as the representative of Jerusalem to the Palestinian National Authority and served as the former spokeswoman for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during the Oslo Peace Process. After she was asked about the alleged poor treatment of Christians on the hands of Muslims within the Palestinian Authority, Ashrawi, a long-time adversary of late Palestinian Prime Minister Yasser Arafat, responded as follows: ‘Quite the contrary. Arafat was much more conscious of supporting the Christians than I was, because I don’t look at people on the basis of their faith or their religion. I believe in separation of church and state’.

Palestinians define their identities within the cultural, political, and historical assertion about the existence of Palestinians and a Palestinian territory. These people assert that international laws must recognize and protect each ethnic group in the world. The disenfranchisement of Palestine was attributed to the role of England in ending the Ottoman Empire. Specifically, as Arabs, the Palestinians strongly opposed the anti-Semitic acts that Jews suffered at the hands of Europeans and which eventually drove them to immigrate to Palestine during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

This thesis examines the conflict and struggle between Israel and Palestine, particularly in the period following the Oslo Agreement of 1993. Ideology questions are central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In order to better understand the process of land ownership and transfer during different periods of Palestine’s modern history, it is necessary to have briefly review land issues during the Ottoman rule, the

period of the British Mandate, after the imposition of the Israeli state, and in the period after the 1967 War and then begin to assess what the impact of these different periods may have had on Palestinian communities. The historical revision of the struggle over land during the last four decades of Ottoman rule until the signing of the Oslo Agreement clarifies and reinforces the significance of the struggle which took place in the last decade of the twentieth century. The Oslo Accords and subsequent summits failed to produce successful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, further enabling spin tactics and blame-throwing to take precedence over the lived reality of the issues and reducing what could be starting points for reconciliation to rhetorical tools for dominance.

The religious idiom has always played an important role in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and Jewish nationalism in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the past, however, it was mostly the nationalist Palestinian elites—the notables during the British Mandate and the Fatah movement since the early 1960s—that employed Islamic symbols and themes in order to mobilize popular support for the national cause, whose aims were largely political and secular. Various Arab rulers have also used Islam as an instrument for their policies in the conflict.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has been at the forefront of international attention for more than sixty years, and its roots stretch back more than sixty years before that. The conflict has greatly affected the neighbouring regions as well as the foreign policies of distant nations. The fundamental issue is a fight over possession of the territory of Palestine. Jewish immigrants and their descendants, guided by the nationalistic ideology of Zionism, and the Palestinian Arab inhabitants, among whom the Zionists settled, both claim an exclusive right to inhabit and control some or all of Palestine. Zionism has been the main enemy of

Palestinian Arabs, and it is not possible to analyse the evolution of Palestinian nationalism without understanding the importance of Palestinian opposition to Zionism.

The thesis statement is important because it answers the reader's question, why the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has remained irreconcilable for decades and why the Oslo Accords has failed. While the details and forms of the conflict have changed over time, the central factors dividing Zionists and Arabs in the Middle East have altered little and what factors are and why they have been so effective in frustrating every peace effort.

1.3 Background of the Topic

The roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lie in the late nineteenth century, when Jewish Zionist pioneers from Europe settled in Palestine/Eretz Israel (in Hebrew: 'the Land of Israel'). Beginning in the early twentieth century, under British rule, the Palestinian and Zionist national movements began to realize that they were competing for the same territory. This led the Palestinians to initiate violence against the Zionist pioneers, and this mutually escalated over the years. In 1947, the United Nations voted for the establishment of neighboring Palestinian and Jewish states. The Palestinians objected to the establishment of a Jewish state and initiated the 1948 War, backed by several Arab countries (for the Palestinian it is the Nakba—'catastrophe,' while for the Israeli-Jews the War of Independence). Israel won the war, resulting in some 650,000 Palestinians becoming refugees, relocating for the most part in various Arab countries (the 1948 Palestinian exodus). Some additional 150,000 Palestinians remained in 1948 to live within the State of Israel, established that year. Until 1966, these Israeli-Palestinians lived under a severe military regime,

highly restricting their economic, social and cultural activities. Since then, however, with the lifting of this regime, Palestinians gradually have improved their standard of living, level of education, economic activities, and have constructed a wide cultural system. As of today, their condition is significantly improved compared to the pre-1966 period, and they account for about a fifth of Israel's population (Morris, 2001; Waxman, 2011).

The historical context of religious nationalism, which has emerged as a response to political intransigence, must be investigated. According to religious scholar Karen Armstrong, 'In the past, millennial movements often became more religious when conventional politics failed. So too in the Middle East. After the Six Day War of 1967, when nationalism and socialism seemed to have brought only humiliation and defeat, there was a revival of religious politics with nationalism in the Arab world (Armstrong, 2005).' Armstrong added that in 1987, Islamist parties began to emerge even though Palestinians observed a moderate or secular political/religious orientation and expected their conflicts with Palestine would be resolved through a typical political process. In this way, Palestine served as a case study on religious nationalism and ideological conflicts within Jewish communities instead of Arab societies (Ruether, 2006). To trigger sympathy from Western countries, the reports on extrajudicial assassinations, midnight raids, disproportional seizures of property, and house demolitions regularly being committed by the Israeli military on Palestinians within occupied Palestinian territories were exaggerated. Similarly, the atrocities in Deir Yassin, Walin Salib, and Ein Hod in the 1940s could not be blamed on a country that was established based on the liberal values of a European democracy. Nevertheless, the ideologies of Israeli democratic theory were changed by how liberal democratic theory contradicted the de facto discrimination of

Israelis against non-European Jews and Arabs, some of whom may be currently living as Israeli citizens (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

During the 1980s, the Palestinian Authority declared itself as a sovereign state that was procedurally secular and culturally tolerant of all people within its territorial boundaries. However, upon the falling out of the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s, the Palestinian Authority introduced a new type of nationalism that aggressively used Islam to battle the passive, corrupt plurality of the Palestinian establishment (Beverly, 2006). Such passivity of Palestinian authorities was strongly lambasted by Muslims and eventually resulted in the Second Al-Aqsa Intifada. It likewise led to questions regarding the dynamic between religious authority and procedural secularity within the Palestinian public consciousness.

On September 13, 1993, Palestinians and Israelis traveled to Washington to sign the Oslo Agreement or the Declaration of Principles, which resolved various internal issues, including the mutual recognition between PLO and the Israeli government, the self-government of Palestine, and the establishment of a Palestinian police force.

The Oslo Accords left all the important issues unresolved, leaving many points of contention to the permanent status negotiations that were to follow, including the issues of the status of Jerusalem, the future of Palestinian refugees, the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and future borders of a Palestinian state. The disappointment in the postponement of results to be accomplished by the Israelis sparked the increase in violence seen in the time immediately following the signing of the Oslo Accords. Furthermore, in signing the Oslo Accords, Arafat signed an agreement that he could not deliver on. Arafat had absolutely no control over the all Palestinian organizations, such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

For the Israeli-Jews and the Palestinians, their conflict is the major issue in their existence, ideology, and identity. It takes centre stage in their media, cultural channels, official publications, political discourse and educational systems, and is the central factor in calculating their various activities. This is not surprising, taking into consideration the length of the conflict, its violence, and the significant human, psychological and material toll it took on the involved parties. Both parties see this conflict as part of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007; Khalidi, 2010; Waxman, 2011).

1.4 Problem Statement

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most serious conflicts of our century not only because it is difficult to find a solution satisfactory to both parties, but also because it is an active conflict which threatens the Middle East and the whole world because of the super powers' involvement. The 'peace process' has failed to achieve peace largely on account of an insistence on negotiations between the parties, despite their asymmetry and for its almost complete neglect of international law, specifically the resolutions of the UN (Rubenberg, 2003).

This study is dedicated to examining “religious nationalism” as an actual blockade to successful peace among nations incited regions. Religious nationality is based upon the sense of common sentiment. When nationalism separates one person from another, it impedes the development of harmonious inter-group or international relations and sows the seeds of international rivalry and wars. In its pure form, religious nationalism may be a beautiful ideal, but in its narrow form it becomes a cause of serious division between man and man.

This subject relative the relationship of nationalism to a particular religious belief, affiliation and dogma. This relationship can be broken down into two aspects; the influence of religion on politics and the politicization of religion (Xypolia, 2011). One of the form of religious nationalism is Religious Zionism that stresses the importance of the Torah of Israel, the Land of Israel, and the Nation of Israel (Hellinger, 2008).

In the context of the Middle East, this approach often regards religion and religiosity as critical effects on views about the conflict, and attempting to links strong religious parts to aggressiveness, militancy, and opposition to compromise. The conflict's religious dimension is considered to be mounting and perpetuating its intractability (Cohen, 2005). The hazard is that when the state derives political legitimacy from devotion to religious doctrines, this may leave an opening to overtly institutions, leaders and religious elements, to make the appeals to religion more 'reliable' by bringing more overtly theological interpretations to political life.

Religious nationalism has always been the biggest obstacle against peace in the Middle East. It has prevented reasonable political interventions between the Israelis and Palestinians and has been the main source of aggression and violence. The Oslo accord involved both sides making compromises which they have fought for over 60 years to prevent, which includes the Israelis (Jews mainly) giving up the majority of Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank, and the Palestinians (Arabs mainly) allowing Israel to keep the rest of its land. Therefore, it is impossible for both sides of this conflict to accept a peace policy without first removing the religious factor (Strawson, 2010). Also, get some finding after the signing, whether it has encountered any obstacles on its way, and finally made an account of it success and failure. After the Six Day War in 1967, the Palestinians did not feel comfortable and

had planned to crush Israel with the help other armies from Egypt, Jordan and etc. The plan did not work and only did the Palestinians loss the war but it was more than a war. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were now under control of Israel (Harel, 2009). The creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) came in earlier years, under the leadership of Yasir Arafat their motive was political and a 'paramilitary' organisation of Palestinian Arabs. It dedicated to establishing independent for the Palestinians state, around the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and by so doing, their intention was to replace Israel. Some groups within the organisation have not been in agreement with the redefinition of its mandate not only to conquer the Gaza Strip and West Bank but also Israel.

In this thesis ,it is attempted to address, both theoretically and historically event, why the regime that was set in motion following the disengagement talks of 1974-5 and resulted in the signing of Camp David I Peace Accord between Israel and Egypt, and then culminated in the signing of the Oslo Accords, failed to find a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Three analytical approaches of constructive theory will be utilized to explain the case.

The impact of these endogenous challenges is shown when it faces one or more of the exogenous challenges that will be explicated in detail in Chapter 3 and 4 when the research model is presented. The different approaches will guide the analysis of each of the three endogenous variables as the hypotheses offered are tested. The ability to cover these three essential variables will enable me to focus on the outcome of the regime throughout its different stages and thus see how the failure built up; this is an alternative to becoming drowned in the details of who did what to whom that are the focus of traditional analytic approaches. Thus, the uniqueness of this approach lies in its being a result-oriented model of analysis and in its ability to

focus on how success or failure accrues as the robustness of the regime is either enhanced or impaired. The ability of the model to combine various approaches that tackle different components of the conflict is extremely helpful because it enables me to cover all relevant fronts without being drowned in irrelevant details.

The model of analysis provides taxonomy of the exogenous challenges, making it possible to address nationalism, religion and international events that influence the robustness of the regime. Along with the hypotheses that will be tested, this analysis is presented in next Chapters.

On the Palestinian side of the argument things are no less complicated. The average Palestinian wants Israel to submit the West Bank to the Palestinian authorities, as well as making Jerusalem the capital of Palestine. They claim this on the basis of their religious beliefs as this is their ancestral land, as stated in the Qur'an (Lewis, 1988). Although the Islamic religion is not as old as the Jewish one, its ideals are still very much ingrained into the Palestinian population. However, the vast majority of Palestinians want peace as well as Jerusalem. But, like Israel, there are a certain groups that create the obstacles to obtaining this peace (Juergensmeyer, 2010). The idea of religious nationalism is being maintained through the indoctrination of the young on both sides. Children are being taught from the youngest of ages to believe that whatever the Imam or Rabbi says is the voice of god and therefore is unquestionable. This makes their beliefs very much open to abuse and interpretation. It could be said that being a suicide bomber will take you to heaven or that illegally occupying Arab lands with Jewish settlements is what god wants you to do, and you will believe it. This is the fundamental problem of religious nationalism obstructing for the peace process and political settlement.

By exploring these stages the study examines why the Palestinian-Israeli agreements are difficult to function in the presence of the Israeli policy of confiscating Palestinian land, building new settlements, expanding the present settlements, controlling the majority of the Palestinian territories, and regulating Palestine's international border crossings. Resolving land problems and disputes between Israel and Palestine are the key to any hope of establishing a real and just peace in the long conflict between the two sides. Many studies have been written about the Palestinian-Israeli quarrel and covered many sides of this conflict but the debates about the ideology especially religious nationalism that is effected in the post-Oslo Agreement has not been examined in detail. The majority of studies that examine this period are concerned with the possibilities of finding political solutions that advance the peace process and give it a chance to work and succeed. The contribution of this study is to investigate to why both sides cannot achieve peace.

However, even here it should be noted that very little has been written directly on this subject and much remains obscure. While the general picture could be traced and the general process of the institutionalization of the present relationships between religion and the State could be followed, until now there has not been a full fledged study of the status quo in Israel and its origin and development.

The Israeli-Arab/Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process are among the most studied topics in the areas of conflict resolution and conflict studies. Much of the conflict literature and theory focus on civil conflicts and their implications for the international arena, along with the international rivalry between the two superpowers during the Cold War and its impact on conflicts, ways to contain wars and conflict prevention, and causes and analysis of conflicts (Aron. 1960; Deutsch. 1978;

Huntington. 1993; Ury and Smoke. 1991). Peace in the Middle East was studied extensively during the Cold War within the framework of patron-client relations and conflict management and settlement (Bar-Simman-Tov. 1987; Touval. 1982).

In the wake of the Palestinian Intifada and the so-called New World Order that developed after the Cold War, attention shifted even more to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Finkelstein. 1995; Lieberfield. 1999; Maoz. 1999; Tessler. 1994; Zartman. 1987). As the peace process failed in the wake of the Oslo Accords of 1993, negotiators and mediators published many studies, books, journalistic articles, and memoirs (Aruri. 2003; Beilin. 2002; Enderlin. 2003; Haniyah. 2000; Ross. 2004; Savir. 1999; Sher. 2002). Some more in-depth analytical studies tried to employ theory in analyzing the process, including those by Aggestam (1999); Behrendt (2007); and Soetendrop (2007).

This thesis is unique in its attempt to employ various strands of religious nationalism ideology that focus on different, but complementary, levels of analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the failure. The sources to be analyzed include historical documents, memoirs, existing analyses of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, UN resolutions, and negotiations and mediation literature.

1.5 Theoretical Discussion

In the field of international relations the constructivist perspective has become particularly prominent, not only due to the shortcomings of previously dominant perspectives, namely realism and liberalism, but on account of its explanatory capacity and ability to effectively respond to the challenge posed by the post-9/11 era. Constructivism's focus on norms and identity in shaping interests makes it a particularly useful perspective in the context of conflict resolution.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the work of Nicholas Onuf (1989), and Alexander Wendt (1999), followed by that of Friedrich Kratochwil (1989), Martha Finnemore (1996), and Peter Katzenstein (1996) constructivism has developed an impressive potential to explain change in international relations in terms of norms and identity factors. These ideas were further developed in such work as Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) article in *International Organisation* on 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change'; Kubalkova, Onuf, and Kowert's (1998) *International Relations in a Constructed World*; and Wendt's (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*.

Constructivism focuses on how threat perceptions, the object of security, are socially constructed. Thus mainstream theories of International Relations are concerned with 'why' questions and are considered 'explanatory', while constitutive constructivist approach is considered with 'how' questions and is considered as 'understanding'. Constructivism is an important theory in international relations that emphasizes 'identities, norms, and culture in world politics.' In this way, constructivism uses the identities and interests of states as tools for interaction, similar to institutions, rules, and cultures. This theory emphasizes the processes instead of the structures of different actors and institutions to achieve interaction and peacefully resolve the conflicts in the arena of international relations (Wendt, 1999).

The theory of constructivism also offers a combination of social theory of knowledge where the involvement of all the relevant actors/players to an issue or conflict are a requisite, as well as somewhat rejects an individualist approach and theory of action, as is the case in, for example the theory of realism. Then there is the analysis of power in explaining the theory of constructivism, where theorists of constructivism argue that the distinction of the levels of observation and that of

action, followed by a reflexive link between the two levels is central for a better understanding of the said theory (Guzzini, 2000).

Constructivism aims to understand the social construction of reality (Adler, 1997). According to Campbell, a threat is constructed when the community is differentiated from a threatening 'other,' thereby protecting the community from external threats. Such boundary drove Palestinians to establish their own identities, which in turn had a significant role in the emergence of the Iran–Palestine conflict (Maoz, 2000). In 1917, the British mandate for Palestine, a legal commission that ruled Palestine following the suggestions of the League of Nations, issued the Balfour Declaration (Appendix one) and vowed that predominantly European Zionists could establish a Jewish 'national home' in Palestine (Landau, Party, & Laqueur, 1974). Arab intellectuals and activists were also greatly influenced by the presence of Western countries in the conflict. These people built their self-determination by regarding themselves as distinguished 'Arab' people with rights to sovereign statehood (Khalidi, 2006).

Constructivism also provides insights toward the factors that resulted in or have intensified the Israeli–Palestinian–Arab conflict. This theory posits that our identities as social beings are defined by a social environment (Risse, 2005). Constructivism draws on social theory to create a conceptual outline of social life and transformation. For instance, Jews are considered an ethno-religious group that includes Jewish-born people and Judaism converts, whereas 'Hebrews' are associated with the ancient Israeli Kingdom. However, people who reside within 'the Israeli land' are currently being referred to as Jews, even though traditional Jewish laws strictly define a Jew as any person born of a Jewish mother or who has converted to Judaism. The underlying differentiations between religion and ethnicity,

which are inapplicable to Judaism because of its social environment, have been examined in many studies (Boyarin, 1994). According to Boyarin, ‘Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity, because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but of all these, in dialectical tension’ (Morris, 2001).

From a constructivist perspective, the present study analyzes the origins and sustenance of the Israel–Palestine conflict. The constructivist approach has a crucial role in connecting idealism with materialism and connecting rationalist epistemologies with reflectivist ones (Adler, 1997). The idealist ontology of social constructivism is particularly attractive since it offers the prospect of ‘via media’(Adiong, 2009). In 1954, Palestinian group, primarily in Gaza, began to take commando action and conduct raids, this is seen by constructivists as the materialistic sociological structure. This is the most fundamental fact about society in nature and organization of material forces, e.g. forces of destruction (Wendt, 1999).

The socially constructed identities in either Palestine or Israel can lead to another type of conflict that is based on ethnicity and religion (Yanacopulos & Joseph, 2006). However, whether the Israel–Palestine conflict was caused by religion, land, ethnicity, and identity remains unknown. This thesis adopts the constructivist lens to address such question, with a particular focus on the formation of self-identities and interests between these two countries. Given that constructivism is a product of critical theory and that this paper aims to provide a ‘critical analysis’ of the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict, adopting the constructivist perspective to examine the issue at hand is considered appropriate.

Constructivism analyzes collective understandings and examines how political actors define the material and social worlds. After outlining the roles of land

and religion in the Arab–Israeli conflict, this thesis aims to examine how political and religious leaders exploit these elements to achieve the objectives of statehood. Given that Israelis are afraid of being minorities in their own land, the link between religion and land has validated the claims that Jewish Zionists and Arab Nationalists in Palestine are yearning for a separate state and a distinct identity. Immense importance has been placed on identities because, through differentiation, these people consider themselves special and enjoy some privileges that may be considered offensive by other concerned groups. The construction of a social world greatly depends on human agents (e.g., political leaders) and their daily opinions, ideas, beliefs, languages, signs, and other activities (Adler, 1997; Fearon & Wendt, 2002). Constructivism emphasizes intersubjective beliefs, including ideas, conceptions, and assumptions (Jackson & Sorensen, 2010). Hence, how leaders and their people identify themselves with the state may present the answer to the question regarding the root of the Israel–Palestine–Arab conflict. The identities and interests of people, as well as how they perceive themselves in relation to others, greatly depend on their norms and shared beliefs. The shared religious beliefs of Jewish communities, which emphasize the importance of land in messianic tradition, have been exploited by elites who believe they must populate ‘the Promised Land.’ Given that constructivists focus on the social identities and interests of actors (Ibid), the Israeli–Palestinian–Arab conflict can be further understood through the constructivist lens, as such conflict is believed to have emerged from shared religious beliefs and threats to identity. This theory aims to determine the dominant interpretation and the reason political actors prefer to create new interpretations of reality (Ibid). Constructivists also examine how people connect themselves to one another through collective social institutions despite their inherent differences

(Adler, 1997). Therefore, the present thesis investigates the past and present situations of people residing within the countries under investigation. In sum, constructivism posits that the Israel–Palestine conflict will never be resolved unless both countries take the time to discuss their demands (Yanacopulos & Joseph, 2006). Separate discussions and negotiations may lead to further misunderstandings that can intensify the already-extreme conflict between these countries. However, the conflict continues to intensify even though international mediators in the Palestinian conflict have followed the constructivist approach by signing agreements and discussing their terms (Smith, 2004). This section assumes that the constructivist approach must be adopted to understand and eventually resolve the Israel–Palestine conflict.

1.6 Aims and Objectives

With these points in mind, one of the aims of the research will focus on understanding the various factors that are at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As such, an objective of the study is an attempt to contribute to existing research material that focus on this conflict. Such a contribution will focus on identifying and examining different points of view regarding the conflict. Studies conducted thus far have focused on identifying factors that might lead to the future resolution of the conflict. This thesis, however, will have as its focus the proposal that both sides involved have a stake in the continuation of the conflict. In this context, a further objective of the study is to examine nationalism, and specifically religious nationalism, as this ideal manifests in the minds of those on either side of the conflict. In terms of the specific nations being examined, the study will make clear that Arab and Jewish nationalism, unlike the generally-accepted meaning of the term, have developed around a rigid sense of territoriality for both sides. On the basis

of this, the conflict builds on the ideal on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides to build their nation-state within the Palestinian territory.

Specifically, religious nationalism presents a crucial factor within the central conflict experienced by the Arab and Israeli sides. For the Israelis, their nationalism is based upon religious Zionism, which focuses on the Land of Israel. In this nation, there is no compromise possible regarding territory, since the territory in question is promised to them by no less than the authority of God. The same religious fervour is forwarded by the Arab Muslims, who basis their 'right' to the territory on their own religious history. This study does not essentialize religious identification, but it does take religious affiliation as an important category of analysis, which can help explain some of the complexities present in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This dissertation contributes to the study the ongoing attempts of getting a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel and will also examine the role of religious nationalism in failure of the Oslo peace accord that started the peace process. It will also highlight a brief history of the two nations involved, that brought about the signing the historic Oslo Accords. This work is therefore anchored in an effort to focus on the connection, in conflict-ridden ethnoreligious national contexts, between questions of religion, nationalism and citizenship, on the one hand, and peace and justice.

By exploring these stages, it is shown that why Palestinian-Israeli agreements are difficult to achieve in the presence of the Israeli policy of confiscating Palestinian land, building new settlements and expanding the present settlements according to their security plans. The Palestinians have rejected Israeli activities and demands. Therefore, the study will investigate these problematic aspects of the peace process within the Contribution of constructivist perspective and discourse on this conflict. These aims and objectives will form the core of the research.

1.7 Research Questions

This thesis acknowledges the relevance and importance of these perspectives, but contends that, in addition, the failure to resolve the conflict must be understood in terms of norms and identity factors. This thesis examines the Israel-Palestine conflict from a constructivist perspective and seeks to investigate the underlying causes that led to the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. All the attempts that have been made to reach an agreement between both parties have revolved around the role of religious nationalism of both parties. Therefore, the overarching question that this paper seeks to answer five central research questions:

1. What factors are at the root of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict?
2. Why did the Palestinian- Israeli peace process fail?
3. What are the specific interests of each side in continuing the conflict?
4. What is the role of religious nationalism in the Oslo Accords?

In seeking an answer to the research question to have made an effort to include different elements such as politics, religious beliefs, economy and survival. This is something to often find missing in the extensive literature on the subject. Many people have written about the Oslo agreement and the opposition to it¹. However, there is a tendency to focus upon very few factors at a time, and the result then, in my view, only explains part of the reasons behind the opposition. The thesis strives to provide a complex explanation of group's resistance rather than a single factor explanation.

Any attempt to answer such a question has to take into account as many factors as possible because it would be impossible to discern one or two factors as the primary

¹ See Mishal (2000), Hroub (2002), Abu-Amr (1993), Nüsse (1998), Milton-Edwards (1996).

causes that led to the failure of resolving the conflict. Thus far, history has made it clear that none of the strategies attempted thus far have achieved lasting peace. Indeed, as mentioned, partition and separation have been at the core of the territorial discourse since as early as the 1930s and have remained unresolved since.

In terms of the domestic context, the Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews are unable to agree with any type of territorial compromise. As such, the conflict is perpetuated as an instrument for maintaining their divergent positions. Underlying this is the meaning of the territory in terms of Jewish and Palestinian religious nationalism. This conception of nationalism and religion on the side of either party is rigid and uncompromising and hence unable to resolve itself and important cause of the failure of the peace process. This fuels the desire for continuing the conflict.

This is what this thesis strives to find out. In the extensive literature on the subject three factors that can explain the movement's resistance stand out. These are political, religious and nationalism. In identifying some groups' reasons to oppose the Oslo agreement one must look at all these factors because the issue is very complex and the research question necessitates a multifaceted answer. The thesis will seek to answer which one of these factors that constituted the most important reason to resist.

1.8 Limitations of the study

While trying to prove this hypothesis, this thesis will not try to put forward possible solutions to the above mentioned core issues. Instead, the focusing points will be the reasons that are responsible for the continuation of the conflict emanated from the clash of religious nationalisms and led to the failure in the peace processes. The assessment of both nationalisms is not reflected in the same order of the founding factors of nationalism. In Palestinian nationalism, religion is elaborated

first of all as the founding factor of Palestinian nationalism is religious beliefs unity among the Arabs living on the territory. In Zionism, the desire of the Jews to a territory pertaining for establishing their homeland was the basic need to have for the Jews. After determining Palestine as the appropriate place, Zionists used culture and religion as being a pulling effect in the territory. The thesis is going to on the basic developments that set up the basics of the conflict rather than bringing forward a detailed historical chronology of the various events that have used place in different stages of the conflict. This study will not be a depth observation of religious nationalist movements of both sides, that is, it will focus on the mere analysis of the rapprochements of these people to the Land of Palestine.

There are additionally some issues that put some limitations to the study. The first is theoretical and the second is historical. The theoretical one is related to what kind of religious nationalism, it is that this thesis deals with. There are various definitions of religious nationalisms in the literature. It is generally discussed in the literature of religious nationalism that depended on loyalty to a state (Hayes, 1966; Smith, 1996). Though there are various similarities and differences between the abovementioned issues and Palestinian case, the study has generally concentrated on how the clash between nationalisms with religion resulted in the conflict of Israeli and Palestinian. Their nationalisms were built on their commitment to a territory: the land of Palestine. All of the other founding factors of nationalism such as religion, history and culture are given for both sides. This study analyses their religious nationalisms as bearing these given facts in mind.

The historical concern is the time limitation of the study. Firstly, this study focused on the developments in the Oslo process, a peace process that is aimed at achieving a peace-treaty based on the United Nations Security Council Resolution